

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 20, 2003

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HHS TO FUND DEMONSTRATIONS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN PERSONAL ASSISTANCE WORKERS TO HELP PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today called for proposals for programs to recruit and train direct service workers, those workers who provide personal assistance to people with disabilities who need help with eating, bathing, dressing and other activities of daily living.

“We need to act now to bolster the care-giving workforce so that we are ready for the tremendous increase in need for these services as the Baby Boom generation ages,” Secretary Thompson said. “This demonstration will encourage new approaches that could make providing personal assistance more inviting and rewarding for potential workers.”

A part of the President’s New Freedom Initiative, the Demonstration to Improve the Direct Service Community Workforce will fund seven to ten projects around the U.S. designed to develop and implement programs that will recruit and retain direct service workers.

States and community-based organizations that provide direct care services to people in local communities are being urged to submit proposals. HHS is particularly interested in programs testing whether offering health care coverage to workers will increase and sustain interest in these occupations. However, applicants may wish to devise and implement other recruitment and retention strategies as well.

HHS’ Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will provide nearly \$6 million from the fiscal year 2003 federal budget to those programs selected as demonstration participants. The maximum award will be \$1.5 million for projects that provide health insurance benefits to workers. For other types of projects, the maximum award will be \$750,000 per applicant.

“These personal assistance workers are the backbone of the nation’s community-based long-term care system, and should have the same access to health insurance and other work incentives as millions of working Americans,” CMS Administrator Tom Scully said. “Through this demonstration, a part of President Bush’s New Freedom Initiative, we hope to be able to attract and retain more of them.”

The notice soliciting proposals will be available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/newfreedom>. Applications must be received by Aug. 12, 2003.

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